

EVIDENCE BRIEF

DO NO HARM FOR FAITH GROUPS CASE STUDIES: EL SALVADOR AND KENYA

ABOUT THE INTERVENTION

Do No Harm (DNH), also known as Local Capacities for Peace, is an approach used to build individual and organizational capacity in conflict sensitivity. The concept, which emerged from medical practice and traces its beginnings from the Hippocratic Oath, has been adopted by international development and relief organizations in an approach designed to minimize unintended and harmful impacts of humanitarian action and development initiatives on conflicts between social groups.

In 2017, using the Do No Harm approach, World Vision developed **Do No Harm for Faith Groups** (DNH4FG), a workshop designed specifically to help religious leaders or staff working for faith-based organizations become more conflict sensitive. The stated goals of the DNH4FG workshop are to “provide faith leaders with an understanding of DNH principles,” and to “help faith leaders rediscover what sacred scriptures and religious texts say about peacebuilding.” The DNH4FG workshop helps to cultivate four sets of values for reconciliation among faith leaders: respect, tolerance and acceptance; proximity; unity; and collective action.

Two primary shifts were made in the standard DNH curriculum to contextualize it specifically for faith leaders:

- The DNH4FG workshop expands upon technical humanitarian and development approaches to include the approaches by which faith leaders influence and serve their communities. For example, DNH for Faith Groups shifts the focal point of analysis to actions such as preaching and visiting homes.
- Sacred texts (typically the Bible for Christians and the Qur’an for Muslims) are used as a resource to integrate faith-based instruction with instruction in DNH principles and tools.

Do No Harm for Faith Groups teaches faith leaders to apply conflict sensitivity through five steps:

1. Knowing their context
2. Knowing their actions and behaviours in that specific context
3. Knowing how their actions and behaviours impact the community (positively or negatively)
4. Finding options to mitigate negative impact
5. Selecting the best alternatives/options to changing their actions and behaviours to minimize negative impact.



ABOUT THE RESEARCH

El Salvador Case Study

Two DNH4FG workshops were conducted in the municipality of Soyapango, an area where World Vision had previously worked together with Catholic and Evangelical church leaders around issues of violence prevention and child protection. Twenty faith leaders participated in each of the DNH4FG workshops, conducted in August 2019 and March 2020. Given that the vast majority of participants in the first workshop were Evangelical, special effort was given to increasing participation by Catholics in the second. The case study methods, which had to be adapted due to restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, included: Whatsapp communications with faith leaders who participated in the workshops; Most Significant Change interviews conducted by World Vision El Salvador staff in September and October 2020; and, surveys of faith leaders who participated in the workshops and of members of their congregations, conducted in January 2021.

Kenya Case Study

The DNH4FG pilot programme was implemented in the Changamwe Area Development Programme in Mombasa, an urban area characterized by religious and ethnic diversity and where World Vision had existing relationships with Christian and Muslim faith leaders and a local interfaith association. Twenty faith leaders (8 Muslim, 12 Christian) participated in the DNH4FG workshop, including pastors and imams, as well as religious teachers, several of whom also worked with child- and youth-serving organizations, including religious schools. The case study was conducted in August 2019, four years after the DNH4FG workshop was conducted. It included focus group discussions and key informant interviews with faith leaders who had participated in the workshop.

The research was designed to assess the application and impacts of Do No Harm for Faith Groups among faith leaders in two urban, fragile contexts:

- Mombasa, a large city-county on Kenya's southeastern coast, where an interfaith group of Christians and Muslims participated; and
- Soyapango, an urban municipality just outside El Salvador's capitol city of San Salvador, where Catholics and Evangelicals participated.

In both contexts, the research addressed the question of whether the DNH4FG workshop led to changes in faith leaders' knowledge, behaviour and decision-making related to minimizing harm in their communities. The research also addressed whether engaging faith leaders in conflict sensitivity and intra- and inter-religious collaboration through the workshop might serve a foundation for engaging them in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts.

“Thank you for the opportunity I had to learn and participate in the Do No Harm workshop. The training invited us, as faith leaders, to serve better in everything we do. The training helped me to be more creative in the assessment of different options that churches have. It widened our picture about the options that the church has, opportunities of peace and not of conflict, taking others into account in everything we do and not dividing the community.”

Evangelical Pastor, El Salvador

RESEARCH PARTNER: The research team was led by Johonna McCants-Turner, Associate Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo (formerly Assistant Professor, Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, Eastern Mennonite University)

KEY FINDINGS:

Across both contexts examined, the research found that through Do No Harm for Faith Groups, faith leaders are motivated to engage in conflict sensitivity, are prepared to engage in peace-making, and ultimately, in peacebuilding.

- DNH4FG involved faith leaders in a process that was formative for them personally as well as for their faith journeys and the multiple leadership roles that they occupy in their communities
- Faith leaders participating in the Do No Harm for Faith Groups workshop learned a common language to reflect together on their role in the social dynamics of their communities – for example, how they can serve to connect rather than divide..
- The workshop helped faith leaders learn to use problem-solving, adaptation, creativity and empathy to address barriers to harmony and justice at the most grassroots level by becoming more tolerant, respectful and embracing of others.
- Faith leaders developed networks coming together across inter-faith and inter-denominational religious differences, and within and across existing organizations and institutions, to minimize harm.



“It changed my heart and I realized we should not be divided by religion or faith barriers because we all belong to God who is our Creator, and that we can work together as brothers for the benefit of the community and humanity.”

Pastor, Kenya

Acceptance, respect and open-mindedness:

Participating faith leaders shared that they apply conflict sensitive language, lenses and steps to guide how they analyze and transform their own assumptions and values, and their attitudes and actions toward others. Faith leaders described themselves as newly engaged in the practice of asking questions of others in order to understand their perspectives, offer support, and build and strengthen relationships. A Catholic faith leader in El Salvador said, “I think the most significant change was the fellowship and exchange of experiences that took place. In my personal life it helped me to become more tolerant with people.”

Faith leaders in Kenya shared that participating in the Do No Harm for Faith Groups process led to significant shifts in their attitudes and values. The two most common changes in attitudes and values were shifts toward compassion and mercy, and toward acceptance and open-mindedness. One imam said that his mind had been “opened up by learning many things” and that these changes motivated him to do more.

In El Salvador, faith leaders specifically attested to newly attained respect for religious differences and named objectivity and impartiality as new or deepened values. They said they sought to be more conscious of how their words and actions might be hurtful to others, and reflected on their choices as ministry leaders and the impacts of those choices. Faith leaders made specific changes to church activities and projects to avoid causing unconscious harm and also made explicit connections between personal transformation and changes to their ministries' operations.

“Thank God I was chosen by the pastor of my church to participate in the workshop. There I learned about the methodology of action without harm. I liked the way [they] approached and dialogued with us, with a lot of respect. This knowledge has helped me to accept my brothers and sisters, taking into account the Pope's words where he invites us to see ourselves as brothers and sisters, not to harm each other, and to have more just societies.”

Catholic leader who coordinates the justice and peace team for his church, El Salvador

Inter-faith and inter-denominational cooperation:

Faith leaders in Kenya communicated that the Do No Harm for Faith Groups approach helped them to root their commitments to interfaith cooperation, peace, and reconciliation within the teachings and sacred texts of their faiths. Muslim and Christian members of the local interfaith association said that Do No Harm principles and practices shaped their approaches to child protection and family violence intervention, and motivated them to be more inclusive when engaged in community interventions.

In El Salvador, coming together strengthened relationships among Catholics and Evangelicals. Faith leaders described themselves as developing a new commitment to unity and cooperation, including cooperation with those who share different faith identities and religious beliefs.

“My change as a leader is that now I am aware of my actions, their impact on peace and communion with other ministries, brothers, and churches. This is essential because we teach the children we serve. If they do not see us united, the next generation will have the same problems.”

Evangelical bible school teacher, El Salvador

“It has helped me to go back to the scriptures to reflect on verses that speak on reconciliation. For example, in the Qur'an there is a verse that says ‘I have created you in different tribes, that you may know each other.’

Basically, we shouldn't discriminate [against] any human being.”

Muslim religious teacher, Kenya

Peace promotion:

DNH4FG contributed to forming leaders who engage in basic peacemaking practices and who hold values and principles that are essential for people pursuing peace and reconciliation. In El Salvador, faith leaders who participated in the DNH4FG workshop said it helped cultivate three practices key to peacemaking: critical analysis and self-reflection; caring inquiry; and constructive dialogue.

Since the workshop, participants from the local interfaith association in Kenya have used their positions as religious leaders to call people together to discuss peace. They have targeted primary schools to bring children messages of peace. And during the 2017 elections, religious leaders were called upon to speak on peace in the community.

“One of the most important reflection points during the training was that we have to understand how the community is observing us at a personal and a church level. As the church testifies in everything she does, my personal change was in that direction, to see how we can serve more as peacebuilders in the community and not as conflict and tension agents.”

Evangelical youth pastor and children’s ministry leader, El Salvador



PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION LEADS TO COMMUNITY RESULTS

Several participants in the El Salvador workshops shared stories of their personal transformation and how DNH4FG changed their perceptions and resulted in improvements in addressing church and community issues. One pastor, who has worked for many years to mitigate violence in his community, explained: “As a pastor of the congregation, one has to be an example. That is part of being a leader. That is the hardest part of the Christian life, and it is where we fail the most. Participating in the August workshop was a light in my personal life because it answered some doubts about reality and power relationships. It also gave us very good ideas on improving the work in the church and community; this generated changes. Changing my perception of things helped me identify when we are connectors or dividers, of blessing or harm to others. My challenge is to continue improving in this aspect.”

Another pastor recalled how, before attending the workshop, he struggled with how to address a number of church and community issues. After the workshop, he began thinking about improvements his church could make. “My participation in the workshop is like a testimony of life. I looked for ways to address some issues in the church and the community, but I had not found the way. The workshop was placed by God to fulfill that purpose.”

A nursery school teacher at an Evangelical church shared this story of personal change brought about by her participation in the DNH4FG workshop: “From World Vision, I have learned many good things, skills that I have put at the church’s service, and many of them also helped me in my own home. The first thing I learned was that we must be connectors and not dividers, and that we can do harm without realizing it. If we truly want to change for peace, we must initiate the change from ourselves. When that happens, the rest comes.”

INTERFAITH UNDERSTANDING MITIGATES CONFLICTS

Members of the local interfaith association in Kenya shared stories of how their participation in the DNH4FG workshop helped them take action to bring groups together across religious divides. Several stories addressed interreligious conflicts within families and communities related to burial customs, situations that can often heighten tensions between Christians and Muslims.

One pastor shared a story about the death of a child whose father was a Muslim and mother was a Christian. Within the Islamic tradition, burial should take place within 24 hours of death, but neither of the parents was at peace with that. “I spoke to the chair of our local interfaith association, who is an imam, and with those who wanted to do the burial immediately. Everyone, including the parents, then agreed that it should not happen until the following day. That way, all those that wanted to mourn the child would be present. That brought about peace.”

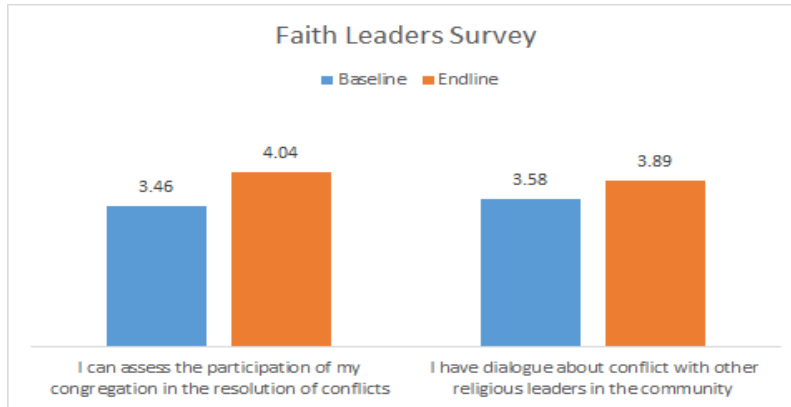
An imam shared the story of a situation in which a visiting pastor would not allow Muslims to offer their condolences to Christian neighbours who had lost their young son. The pastor, who was not from the area, said that no Muslim should view the body. “People came to me and were confused and upset by his actions. I had to explain the importance of neighbours, and that when we are living next door to each other, differences between Christians and Muslims should not divide us. The family and fellow Christians heard this and were happy that I applied wisdom in the situation. They thanked me for caring for the needs of the people.”



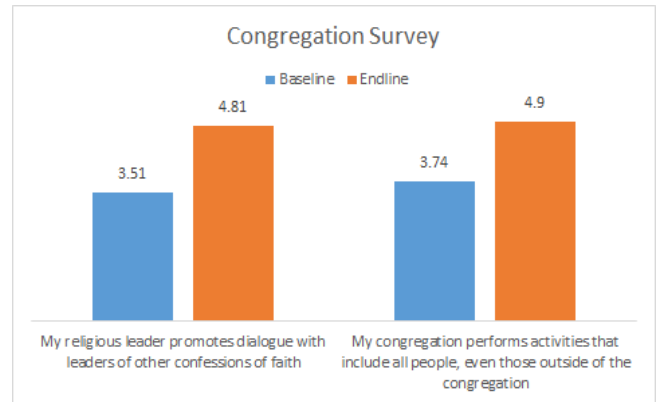
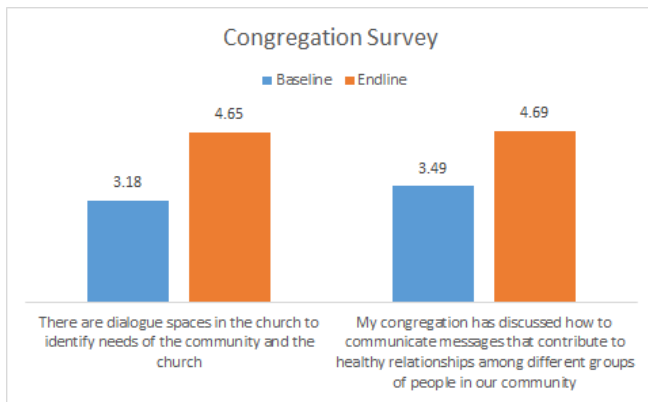
EL SALVADOR SURVEY

Baseline and endline surveys were conducted with 28 faith leaders who participated in the DNH4FG workshop in El Salvador and with 100 congregation members, using a 5-point Likert scale allowing respondents to express how much they agreed (5) or disagreed (1) with a particular statement.*

** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other circumstances on the ground, baseline and endline samples did not include all of the same participants. The findings nonetheless represent a trend toward positive change.*



After participating in DNH4FG, more faith leaders say they engage with both their congregations and with other faith leaders in discussions about conflict resolution.



More congregation members believe inter-faith and inter-denominational dialogue, communication and relationship-building are taking place in their communities after DNH4FG.

PROGRAMMATIC IMPLICATIONS

As more World Vision offices around the world begin to conduct Do No Harm for Faith Groups workshops, the case studies provide several insights regarding enhancing future programme implementation.

Integration with other World Vision programming:

The case studies demonstrate that the Do No Harm for Faith Groups workshop and related tools can enhance the ways in which faith leaders from different backgrounds engage with one another and their communities. Where appropriate, the approach should be considered for integration into other World Vision programming with faith leaders. World Vision's existing relationships with faith leaders can be leveraged to encourage participation in the DNH4FG workshops, which promote acceptance and cultivate new ways of working together.

Sustainability through networking:

The case studies also demonstrate that relationships established through the DNH4FG process can provide the basis for networking that supports long-term collaboration among faith leaders on development and humanitarian efforts in their communities. Whether through a formal association such as the one created in Kenya or through more informal networking such as what took place in El Salvador, this partnering, collaboration and collective action by faith leaders can help maximise reach, acceptance, relevance, and long-term impact of World Vision programming in a community.

